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## THE HISTORY OF THE VERNACULAR IN EDUCATION.

### I.

“FROM one point of view the significance of the development of modern education can best be estimated by the progress of the mother-tongue toward the central place in formal instruction. When the study of the mother-tongue and its literature is made the core of the curriculum, education is something quite different from that training in which a foreign, perhaps an ancient, tongue holds the chief place. No people is intellectually independent until it has a language and literature, all its own, worthy to be an educational instrument and an educational end.”<sup>1</sup>—NICHOLAS MURRAY BUTLER.

THIS ideal of the place of the vernacular in modern education has not long been realized. It is only a few centuries since Latin, with a modicum of Greek and mathematics, was not only the instrument, but also the chief end, of education, and the whole European world was in complete or partial intellectual bondage to an ancient régime which it viewed as pre-eminently “classical.” I wish to trace out some of the steps of the transition from the domination of Latin to its proper subordination within a system in which the vernacular has become, not only an end of education, but also the chief vehicle of instruction.

I will make a brief general statement of this process as a preliminary to the more detailed discussion of the subject. The whole movement has been marked by several distinct, though overlapping stages. The vernacular has its first development, its decline, its renascence, and its final independence. With the breaking up of the old Roman empire the development of the vernacular received an impulse which made itself felt especially in the realm of popular literature—that of romance, song, and devotion. Becoming significant as early as the ninth century, it attained the zenith of its early development through the various countries of Europe at different times within the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries. The Revival of Learning gave an added impulse to the study of Latin and Greek, which was

<sup>1</sup> Editor’s Introduction to CHUBB’S *The Teaching of English*.

responsible for the withdrawal of the educated classes from the field of vernacular literature and a consequent decline in the literary use of the vulgar tongue. This period of decline, comparatively short in Italy and longer in the rest of Europe, was followed by a renascence of the vernacular, in which the fruits of classical study were an important factor in the enrichment and embellishment of the vernacular vocabulary and style. But before this mother-tongue, which has already entered the field of literature, can win its complete independence and take its place in the school as *par excellence* the vehicle of instruction and itself holding an honored place in the curriculum, two things have to be shown: (1) that there are subjects of study, a body of knowledge, which can be studied in the vernacular to as good or better advantage than in the current Latin of the schools; (2) that this vernacular both as a language and as a literature is worthy of study. The fulfilment of these two conditions has been a long process, foreshadowed in the Middle Ages, seriously beginning in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and continuing down pretty well to our own day. The cause of the vernacular in elementary education was fairly won in the seventeenth century and the early part of the eighteenth. But the movement of the mother-tongue toward its rightful place in the secondary and collegiate curriculum is one that has but recently culminated, if it may be said even to have culminated as yet.

Taking up now the more detailed study of our topic, we shall begin with the period of the early development of the vernacular — the period of the Middle Ages, or the pre-Renaissance period. Wherever the Roman power went, it stood for the unity of law, and later for the unity of religion; but the unity of language was never achieved. The Roman law and the Christian religion, penetrating to every part of the great empire, carried with them the Latin tongue. But underneath the Roman institutions there always throbbed the life of the subject peoples, flowing on in all its customary activities through its ordinary channels, and finding linguistic expression through its own mother-tongue. That is, the Latin was imposed upon the masses from without, and had never become ingrained; while their own dialects were warm,

intimate, dynamic. We might expect, then, quite naturally that, as the literary interests of the common people developed and grew, a demand would be created for works in their own vernacular; while at the same time both imperial and scholastic interests would find their literary expression through the Latin tongue. Thus, side by side for a long period of years, there were in use two different languages, each representative of a distinct social status. A great gulf was fixed between the learned and the unlearned. The gulf could be crossed and the paradise of learning entered only by those who could use the Latin chart. So long as education was all through the medium of an ancient language, it was the prerogative of the few. The history of the movement of the vernacular toward a central place in education is also the history of the universalization of education.

Under the régime of feudalism it did not so much matter that all learning was locked up in the ancient languages; that books containing, or supposed to contain, all human knowledge were all in Latin and Greek. When all books were manuscript copies, in whatever language they might have appeared, their limited number would have rendered them practically inaccessible to the vast majority of the people. Even if all books had been written in the vernacular, or if all people could have been taught to read Latin, still there would not have been much stimulus to the learning to read and write, if, after they had painfully acquired the accomplishment in the schools, there was to be no opportunity to exercise it out in life. Not until the invention of the printing-press were conditions right for rapid progress in the direction of universal education, whatever language be made the medium. Even if books had not been inaccessible to the many, yet their manner of life was simple, and demanded little more in that line than could be easily furnished orally by the songs and stories of the wandering minstrels and by the homely exhortations of the priest. The beginnings of the vernacular literature were undoubtedly oral. Yet out of these humble beginnings a literature closely in touch with the lives and sympathies of the people grew up all over Europe, and came to have gradually a more or less permanent, and ultimately even a written, form. The first period of its

development begins about the ninth century and extends to the fourteenth.

It is noteworthy that literature in the mother-tongue reached its greatest height during this period in two parts of the old Roman empire which may be regarded as extremes—in England, which was most remote from the source of Roman authority; and in Italy, which was the very center of that ancient power. England had been for only a comparatively short time under Roman domination, and since that time had been almost transformed by the infusion of new blood which had never known the rule of Rome. When the final breakdown of the Roman power came, the Anglo-Saxons were not living under the glamour of the empire. Latin culture had its stronghold in the clergy alone, and the vernacular was much freer than in other countries to develop according to its own genius. While the Latin language was regarded as the great depository of learning, the impetus toward the use of the vernacular in England was very strong. Alfred the Great was an advocate of the mother-tongue, and himself set the example of its use for literary and cultural purposes by translating, or causing to be translated, the *Universal History* of Orosius and also Bede's *History of England*. He is reputed to have been the author also of translations of certain portions of the Scriptures. During the Anglo-Saxon period the national sense began to find expression through the vernacular. The Anglo-Saxon *Chronicles* were begun, though not completed until the Norman period. Poetry in the mother-tongue was also represented in Caedmon's poem of the "Creation." A century of decline set in with the Norman conquest. But out of the amalgamation of races and languages there sprang up, in the fourteenth century, a new and fairer vernacular literature, the chief representatives of which were Langland's *Piers Plowman*, Sir John Mandeville's *Travels*, Wycklif's translation of the Bible, and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*—the latter, at least, still ranking as an English classic. In England, then, even before the Renaissance the literary use of the vernacular had attained a high degree of excellence.

In Italy also, during the period preceding the Renaissance,

there were forces at work destined to produce a vernacular literature of high rank, surpassing in finish and literary merit the work of Chaucer. The struggle for the vernacular in Italy, however, was slower and more toilsome than in England; and before the mother-tongue could reach its high fruition in Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, it had to receive inspiration and impulse from France and other northern countries.

Various influences were responsible for the slow development of the vernacular in Italy. In the first place, the Latin language had more fully dominated the dialects of the peninsula than it had those of the north. Through the long domination of Rome its language had almost absorbed the native Italian dialects. Traditions of Roman secular education lingered long in the Lombard cities. But further than this the native races had been fully nationalized (Romanized). Even after the fall of the empire they still lived under the glamour of the great and noble past. The traditions of the republic and of the empire were *their* traditions; they cherished them and gloried in them. Their attention could not be so easily caught by the newer, popular, and more imaginative epics of chivalry which pleased the ear of the northern peoples and created a demand for their recital in their own tongue. These were, after all, a poor substitute for their own Virgil and Horace and Cicero, even though their knowledge of these classics may have been very vague and traditional. Furthermore, feudalism, with its accompanying institution of chivalry, never took a very firm root in Italy. It was the deeds of chivalry which fired the imaginations of the northern peoples and were the occasion for a large part of the outburst of popular song. Symonds says upon this point: "Not until the Italians under the sway of the Hohenstauffen princes possessed something analogous to a Provençal court were the right conditions for the development of literary art in the vernacular attained."<sup>2</sup> The impetus to a new point of view demanding expression in a new literature was slow in making itself felt. The consciousness of national unity and aim was lacking, or but dimly felt. Italy was for a long time in a state of political unrest incident to the Wars of Investment

<sup>2</sup> Renaissance in Italy, *Italian Literature*, Vol. I, p. 6.

and Independence. This was unfavorable to literary development. The cohesion of the various provinces was one that expressed itself in harking back to a common glorious past, rather than in a feeling of present solidarity. With the failure to acquire national unity there was the accompanying failure to evolve a common vernacular. Each district clung to its own native dialect, or variant from the literary Latin.

While the Italian vernaculars were slow to develop and tended to diverge from one another, yet the gulf between them and the Latin grew wider and wider under the genius of peoples adjusting themselves to new social, political, and industrial conditions. But these Italian dialects did not seem to have vitality, grace, and power enough to make them serviceable for literary purposes until they had come under the influence of foreign literature and the stimulus of the attempt to make them a vehicle for the expression of a new nationalism. In the *langue d'oc* (Provençal), of southern France, a considerable body of vernacular literature had grown up, comprising love songs, battle songs, and satires, written in refined and courtly lyric verse. Provençal singers carried their songs and tales over into northern Italy, where they became popular, especially at the semi-feudal courts. Troubadours or wandering minstrels brought also the hardier and more virile literature of the *langue d'oïl*, of northern France. The *Chanson de Roland* and the Arthurian legends became popular at courts, and the *chansons de gestes* of the Carolingian cycle among the common people. Through the blending of the Provençal, the northern French, and the Italian dialects the latter were refined, and a literary Italian was evolved. The same sort of process was going on in the south of Italy in the Sicilian kingdom, where foreign influence came in with foreign rulers. The Norman king, William II. (about 1166), was a patron of Sicilian poetry. The Provençal popular literature came in, not to usurp, but rather to refine and stimulate. Sicilian was Italo-Provençal style. The Sicilian kings, though themselves of foreign extraction, fostered the spirit of nationalism. Under Frederick II. (1210-50) the national and patriotic impulse was a very significant factor in the cultivation of the new vernacular literature. But, as in

France, so in Italy, while to the south belongs the first fair flowering of the vernacular literature, to the north belongs its permanent fruitage. Of this movement Symonds says: "What the Suabian princes gave to Italy was the beginning of a common language. It remained for Tuscany to stamp that language with her image and superscription, to fix it in its integrity for all future ages, and to render it the vehicle of stateliest science and consummate art."<sup>3</sup> One long stride toward this end was taken in the pre-Renaissance period. We are too prone to think of everything modern as having its seeds in the "Revival of Learning." Before taking up the first great triumph of the Italian mother-tongue under the Tuscan impress, it may be well, for the sake of the light which it throws on our problem, to take a general view of the status of the vernacular in Italian life during the thirteenth century.

The movement toward the literary use of the mother-tongue was inherent in the conditions of life. The ultimate triumph of any one particular dialect as *par excellence* the literary language is a fact not half so significant as that the various dialects had won their place as over against the Latin in all the fundamental interests of life by the middle of the thirteenth century. This they had done by a common principle of the evolution and rise of the vernacular as an instrument of expression and communication. During this century songs and stories popular in other countries, as well as the learning of scholars locked up in the Latin tongue, began to flow freely through the vernacular to meet the growing popular demand. Tales of travel, Frankish romances, religious history, treatises on ethics, great hymns of the church — in fact, specimens from famous works of all sorts — were rendered into the language of the people. Abstracts were made from the Latin books on grammar, rhetoric, astronomy, geography, etc. The bulk of this vernacular literature was confessedly second-hand, yet the wide range of it shows a strong sentiment in favor of the literary and scholastic use of the popular tongue. Literature of all kinds was beginning to "yield to the first strong impact of the native idiom." Some original compositions began to appear

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 27, 28.

in the vernacular, especially memoirs and chronicles. Also it was coming into wide use in correspondence, both private and public.

When Dante began to write in Tuscan, the Italian dialects had already won the day so far as the lower forms of literary art and practice were concerned. Guido Guinicelli, in the latter half of the thirteenth century, was the "founder and prophet of the new and specifically national literature of the Italians."<sup>4</sup> He was followed in the work by a trio of men of rare talent and genius. The first three-quarters of the fourteenth century saw such a wealth of fruitage in the literature of the mother-tongue as was attained in no other country of Europe during the pre-Renaissance period. Dante contributed one of the greatest poems of all time. It won respect for the vernacular and helped to give it a recognized place among scholars as a proper literary medium. Under the hand of Petrarch the vernacular lost all trace of dialect. Though his Italian was Tuscan in source, it was special to no district. "His verse fixes the standard of poetic diction for all time in Italy."<sup>5</sup> Boccaccio exalted not only the language of the common people, but also the literary themes which lay closest to their life and experience. He used not only the vernacular, but also the spirit of the vernacular.

This long discussion of the progress of the Italian vernacular would be disproportionate in this paper, were it not for the fact that the whole movement is such a clear illustration of so many fundamental principles. It is evident that the presence alongside of the vernacular of a superior language of scholarship and literature, even though it be recognized that this language is not fully adapted to the spirit and life of the times, exerts a retarding influence upon the development of the vernacular. The development of Italian literature in face of opposing and retarding influences is indicative of the superior power and propulsiveness of the language of the people as over against any language of scholarship, however ideal that language may be in point of structure or in possibilities of literary style, provided the language of scholarship be regarded as fixed and be kept in isolation from the modifying and "corrupting" influences of the great stream of life.

<sup>4</sup> SYMONDS, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 48.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

The development of the Italian vernacular as an instrument of literary and general expression also illustrates the stimulating effect of the interaction of one language and literature upon another, and this not alone in point of subject-matter, but also in refinement of vocabulary and style. Still further, the rapidity with which literature in the vernacular reached a high degree of perfection raises the question whether there is not yet some further principle operative in Italy with greater force than in the other countries of Europe. The nearness of the Latin language and the Latin models of literary art is an element not common to Italy and other countries to the same degree. While this operated, at the first, as a retarding influence, the vernacular once under way did not have to wait to go through those slow disciplinary processes out of which comes, after long lapse of time, the perfection of language and literary art. The genius and discipline of long centuries of Latin were ever present as a part of the literary inheritance of the Italians. That subtle quality called taste did not have to develop wholly anew. The significance to the vernacular of models afforded by a maturer language is a point not to be lightly overlooked. Finally, we can see in this early history of the Italian dialects that the development and perfection of a language is an evolutionary process in much the same sense of the word as when we speak of the evolution of a race. The process is not one of unfolding like a bud from a central core. Innumerable variations of dialect and usage come into competition with one another. There is a struggle for existence, and according to their adaptability, their power of functioning in the life of the people, they survive and become an element in the living language of a group. All of these principles receive further illustration in the history of the other vernaculars of Europe. Further principles will come to light as we proceed, and specific points under those already developed will come out more explicitly.

The progress of the vernacular in the remaining countries of Europe, so far as concerns this period preceding the Renaissance, may be sketched more briefly; for in none of them did it reach so high a degree of perfection as in England and in Italy. The literature of the mother-tongue in France was earlier, more

varied, more profuse, and in source more cosmopolitan than in any other country; but the language was slow in developing along the lines of structure to the point where the highest results could be achieved. "By the beginning of the ninth century it was compulsory for bishops to preach in Romance, and to translate such Latin homilies as they read."<sup>6</sup> Epic, or narrative, poetry had something of a finished form in the *chansons de geste* as early as the eleventh century. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries almost every kind of literature was attempted. The vernacular could show writings in epic poetry, in the various forms of the drama, and in lyric poetry. The language seemed to have considerable adaptability to writing in verse; but good prose was very slow to develop. Yet this was attempted. Beginnings in the writing of history were made by Villehardouin (twelfth century), Jean de Joinville (thirteenth century), and Froissart (fourteenth century). Their writings were far from being scientific history; but from the literary point of view they were vivid and picturesque in the presentation of fact. Previous to the twelfth century even chronicles had been written in verse. Despite its great defects, the vernacular was coming into use in the more practical and serious phases of life. Elaborate codes of laws were drawn up in the language of the people. It was the frequent medium of homilies, both spoken and written; and much of the learning of the age was either translated or popularized.

In Spain and in Germany the vernacular was likewise in process of development. Spain had her charming story of *Le Cid*; Germany had her minnesingers. Except in the case of a few popular songs and stories, the German language remained unfit for literary use until after the Renaissance; though one poet, Walther von der Vogelweide, stands out as a master of exquisite verse of a certain kind. Further discussion of the German vernacular would better be postponed for treatment in another connection.

There remains for discussion one of the strongest impulses to the early literary use of the vernacular common to all the countries of Europe. This was the spirit of religion and devotion.

<sup>6</sup> SAINTSBURY, *Short History of French Literature*, p. 7.

“Translations of the Psalms and Sunday Gospels had long been in use.” It is said that Alfred the Great fostered such translations in England. “From the time of the Council of Constance, or even earlier, provincial synods laid the duty on priests of explaining these portions during Mass; and Postils and Plenaria which comment upon them in the vernacular meet us everywhere. Metrical versions of the Psalms, such as that of de Moulins in France, or of Maerlant in the Netherlands (1225-1300), were well known among all classes.”<sup>7</sup> The entire Bible was put into French paraphrase in the thirteenth century by Guiars de Moulins, and before the time of Luther it had been put into print, eventually going through sixteen editions. In Germany there were numerous Bible translations before the Reformation, and with the advent of printing they attained wide circulation. “Prior to Luther’s first complete edition in 1534, no fewer than thirty Catholic impressions of the entire Scriptures or portions of them had appeared in the German vernacular.”<sup>8</sup> At least thirteen complete German versions of the Bible anterior to Luther’s have been located, and repeated editions were called for. The same sort of activity was going on to a greater or less degree in England, Italy, Poland, the Netherlands, Holland, and Spain. No organized opposition to this work appeared on the part of the Catholic church until it saw the use to which the reformers were putting it. At all times, however, the church, as the embodiment of scholarship and doctrinal authority, exercised the right of censorship over religious works of all kinds, nor can it be said that the Catholic authorities, like the reformers, encouraged and pushed the work of Bible translation.

By the end of the fourteenth century the situation as regards the vernacular is about as follows: In all the leading European countries it has reached some degree of literary use and excellence. In Italy and in England its fruitage has been of a high order. In France and Germany the popular literature flourished, especially in the realm of poetry and song; but neither of these languages had been fully molded to use in more serious literary pursuits.

<sup>7</sup> *Cambridge Modern History*, Vol. I, The Renaissance, p. 640.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 685.

Narrative and historical writing had made a beginning in most of the countries of Europe. Everywhere those interests which lie closest to the life of the people — story, romance, song, devotion, and religious instruction — claim the vernacular as their medium and instrument. There is a marked tendency in the direction of closing the gap between the learned classes and the masses by bringing over learning into the language of the people, both by way of translations and by way of original compositions in the lowly vernacular. Yet the movement in that direction did not go far enough to undermine Latin as the chief instrument and end of education in the schools. The vernacular did not yet become a factor in the process of formal education. Its position was incidental, not functional. How quickly the vernacular might have attained such dignity in literature and such usefulness in the affairs of life as to have forced its way into the curriculum is an interesting matter of speculation. But the Revival of Learning brought such an added impulse to the study of the classics as to threaten the very existence of the vernacular as an instrument of literature, to say nothing of it as an end to education.

The question may be asked: Why did not this new and living vernacular literature, developing and pushing ahead so rapidly, supplant the Latin literature and force its way into the schools? From some points of view it would have been a very fortunate thing if it had done so. But a closer view of the question seems to show conclusively that it would not have been so great a good fortune as it appears on its face. In no country was the vernacular as yet a fit instrument for the expression of the highest literary art, nor was it even an adequate vehicle for the expression of thought. Now, both of these conditions ought to be met in a literature that is to be made an instrument and an end in school education. Toward the realization of this end, toward putting the language and literature into a shape to satisfy these conditions, the Revival of Learning made a most important contribution. But the fitness of the language and literature is not enough in itself to force the vernacular into the curriculum in competition with the ancient languages. It is only one of the conditions which rendered such a procedure possible. The stress of condi-

tions of life and new points of view with reference to the nature and function of education itself will have most to do with making the vernacular the vehicle of formal instruction and itself an end of education.

The first effect of the Revival of Learning upon the cause of the vernacular was disastrous in the extreme. The rediscovery of antiquity, especially the richness and fulness of its life and literature, was like a new revelation to human consciousness. The wealth of Greek and Roman literature and learning had been obscured, and almost lost, during the troublous times of the barbarian invasions, and the occupation of the field of consciousness with the pressing and vital problems of readjustment to the new and changing conditions of life. The conditions for scholarship had been found in the seclusion of the monasteries alone. Hence those parts of ancient knowledge which played into the hands of theology were practically the only ones which filtered down into the fund of general knowledge, and this, too, through an ecclesiastical and somewhat barbarous Latin. The beauty and the perfection of the classical Latin tongue and its literature were in striking contrast, not alone with the vernacular, but also with the Latin with which they had been familiar. They found so much to admire in the achievements of the Greeks and the Romans that the attention of scholars became focused upon the past and their ideals located in antiquity. For the germinating tendency of the preceding period to look forward there was substituted for a time the backward view. Scholarship centered upon the task of exploring antiquity for its treasures of classic literature and knowledge. The work of editing, compiling, and translating superseded that of original composition. And when original composition was again undertaken, the ideal both of style and of medium was the ancient in preference to the modern. This renascent classicism retarded the growth of the vernacular in Italy, outside of Florence, threatened its very existence. The popular literature became despised by scholars. This attitude of mind generalized included in like contempt the very best that the mother-tongue had produced. Niccolo Niccoli, though himself a Florentine, called Dante "a poet for bakers and cobblers." Everywhere the gap

between the learned and the unlearned, between scholars and the laity, which had been closing up during the preceding period, was reopened and widened. The problem of the universalization of education has its solution complicated again and postponed by the setting up in opposition to each other of the learned and the vulgar tongues. The rising class of scholars and professors moves farther and farther away from the interests of the common people. The Humanist thought it beneath his dignity to use the mother-tongue. His ideal was to write in Latin for a reading public composed of the learned. He could not waste his time on common folk. To write or speak to a public composed of the vulgar crowd was essentially lowering to the scholar. His place was within the refined circle of the court and the palace. Pecuniary interest, however, occasionally led a Humanist of high rank to lecture or write for a part of the time in the vernacular. Thus Bruni lectured and wrote on Dante and Petrarch.<sup>9</sup> Yet when such a thing as this occurred, it was usually with an apology for the use of the vulgar tongue, showing that the real attitude toward it was one of condescension or of contempt. This situation as regards the vernacular was earlier, more extreme, and of shorter duration in Italy than in the countries farther north. Before taking up the renascence of the vernacular and the benefits which flowed to the mother-tongue from the Revival of Learning and its Humanistic trend, it may be well to take a look at the status of the vernacular in the schools during the period roughly covered by the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

With the vernacular held in contempt by scholars and its literature despised, we should not expect to find that the mother-tongue had any place in the school. The Humanistic ideal dominated education from the primary school to the university. The study of the classics was thought to give the kind of discipline and training that best fitted for any kind of life for which any special training was necessary. If the vernacular ever had found access to the schools up to this time, it was now most certainly thrust out. The child was introduced at once to the study of Latin without any previous study of the mother-tongue. There

<sup>9</sup> SYMONDS, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 235, 236.

seemed to be no more reason why the school should usurp the function of the home in the matter of teaching the native language than it should in giving instruction in the art of milking cows. In fact, the whole idea of the school was to exclude just as completely as possible the use of the vernacular from education. At some time between the sixth and the ninth years of his life the child began his career as a disciple of antiquity. The first thing that he studied was Latin grammar. This he did not learn through the language which he already knew, but through the verbal study of a grammar written in Latin. He had to commit to memory hundreds of rules and exceptions, all in the Latin tongue. The aim of this study was precision in speech and successful imitation of models, leading up to the mastery of Latin eloquence. The study of Latin verse preceded that of prose, and without any previous experience and training in the art of composition in the pupil's native tongue. As Latin eloquence and polish of diction were the ideal of education, the schools short-circuited the process by dropping out from consideration practice in the vernacular, or even in the more simple and direct Latin of Cæsar, Livy, and Lucretius, and centered their attention upon Horace and Virgil, and especially Cicero.

In order that the Latin education might be interfered with as little as possible by the experience which the child already had in the exercise of his mother-tongue, all sorts of restrictions were laid upon the use of the vernacular. It was a common thing for fathers and masters strictly to forbid boys to read works in the vernacular. Benedetto Varchi was soundly rated and nearly expelled from school for reading Petrarch on the sly. The Jesuits forbade the use of the vernacular except on holidays, and the Protestant Sturm shortened the periods of recreation in order not to run the risk of his pupils speaking German on the playground. The statutes of most of the universities made the speaking of Latin compulsory. That at Ingolstadt reads: "A master in a bursary shall induce to the continual use of Latin by verbal exhortations and by his own example; and shall also appoint those who shall mark such as speak the vulgar tongue and shall receive from them an irremissible penalty."<sup>10</sup> Again: "That students in

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in MONROE'S *Comenius*, p. 3.

their academic exercises may learn by habit of speaking Latin to speak and express themselves better, the faculty ordains that no person placed by faculty upon a common or other bursary shall dare to speak German. Anyone overheard by one of the overseers to speak German shall pay one kreutzer.”<sup>11</sup>

In spite of all the stress laid upon Latin education in the sixteenth century, the attempt to isolate boys from their native social and linguistic environment, and make out of Italian and French and German boys Romans after the pattern of Cicero and Horace, was not a very startling success. The path of the educator, as well as that of the boy, was overlaid with thorns and difficulties. Statutes, fines, spies, and floggings were not adequate to the suppression of the mother-tongue. It had within it the dynamic power of life. The outcome of the struggle of that which is living and functioning with that which is dead and fixed cannot be a matter of doubt. A historian of the period writes: “Boys and teachers were alike unhappy; great severity of discipline was practiced, and after all was done, and all the years of youth had been spent in the study mainly of Latin, the results were contemptible.”<sup>12</sup> Cordelier, writing in 1530, says: “Our boys chatter French with their companions; or if they try to talk Latin, cannot keep it up.”<sup>13</sup> The production of a man who could really write Latin with a master-hand was rare indeed. Exotic culture is pretty sure to be more or less artificial. Even Macaulay,<sup>14</sup> who is fulsome in his praise of Milton, meets the criticisms made on the great poet’s style in his Latin poems by the virtual admission of the fact that the same standard cannot apply to him as to those who in writing Latin made use of their native tongue. Naturally this Humanistic training was no more effectual in producing men who could wield the vernacular well, so long as the ideal was imitation of the classics. In applying the Latin as a standard for the vernacular, they had a false ideal of style; for the genius of the various languages is essentially different. Study of Latin which was primarily philological and for the sake of grammatical structure, and only secondarily for the sake of the literary content and a correct understanding of the author, was not likely to have a very valuable reflex influence upon the use of

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> *Essay on Milton.*

the vernacular. The externals rather than the spirit of the classics were absorbed. Many of the best Humanistic scholars could not write clearly and sensibly in the native idiom. Their composition was vitiated by pedantic Latinisms of rhetoric and of vocabulary. Men as great as Varchi and Alberti, when they attempted to write in Italian, could not overcome the Latinistic tendencies of their training. Cristoforo Landino's belief that "he who would fain be a good Tuscan writer must first be a Latin scholar"<sup>15</sup> was true only with decided qualifications. Even familiar correspondence was made pedantic by being loaded down with Latin phrases. The first effect of Humanism has been to postpone the day when the vernacular shall triumph in the field of education. In spite of all this, Humanism does have a positive contribution to make to the cause of the vernacular, but not until it has been transformed by a new ideal. We shall next take up the renascence of the vernacular under the impulse of the second Humanistic ideal.

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<sup>15</sup> SYMONDS, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 237.